



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

8th SESSION

17th June 2008, Geneva

**Agenda item 9. Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and
related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the
Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Statement by the

**INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES**

Check against delivery

Mr. President/Chairman,

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies welcomes this discussion on racism and the active preparation of the Durban +5 Conference, which is of vital importance to us.

Since its inception, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has actively challenged racism and discrimination. Our commitment to protecting human dignity and tackling discrimination was recently given an additional practical dimension at our Red Cross/Red Crescent 30th International Conference, through the adoption of the Declaration "*Together for Humanity*". It includes a commitment to: "*...mobilise community respect for diversity and action against racism, discrimination, xenophobia, marginalization and other forms of exclusion*".

This commitment is an active reflection of the way we manage all our programs, in all parts of the world.

Despite all that has been done, and all the laws enacted by governments, discrimination remains an endemic problem today. It is particularly troublesome to have witnessed the urban violence which has affected South Africa, a "Rainbow Nation" which has built a strong record of tolerance, embracing many cultures and languages.

Nevertheless, the South African Red Cross Society stands as an example of a National Society whose preparedness and volunteer strength has enabled it to be an effective provider of emergency relief. It is also an example of the way the IFRC is able to support a National Society. We provided emergency relief assistance through our Disaster Response Emergency Fund, and integrated an anti-discrimination perspective in the operational response, by including displaced communities in the decision-making processes.

The auxiliary role of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies to their public authorities in the humanitarian field, offers them a privileged platform to engage in humanitarian advocacy and influence decision-making. At the same time, we recognise that we need to do more.

We see now many Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies supporting youth camps, which bring together volunteers from different cultures and religions, to foster understanding and explore

ways of working together. We strongly believe in the role of youth as agents for behavioural change.

Let me conclude, Chair, by reiterating the need to reinforce the foundation of our common existence as members of a universal human family with inherent dignity, and equal and inalienable rights.

We look forward to taking these points further in our discussions with members of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner. We will in particular be examining the best ways of employing the energy of our National Societies and their grass roots network of tens of millions of trained volunteers in the promotion of effective humanitarian dialogue which makes a real contribution to addressing the causes of racism and discrimination.

Laws have been made, virtually everywhere, but more needs to be done. We call upon governments to support capacity-building at the grass roots level and campaigns designed in consultation with the communities themselves. We will be emphasising this point in Durban, and look forward to your support as we develop and intensify our own programs in this area.

Thank you

